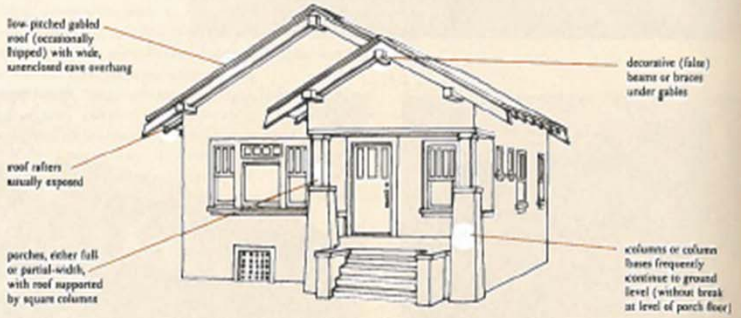
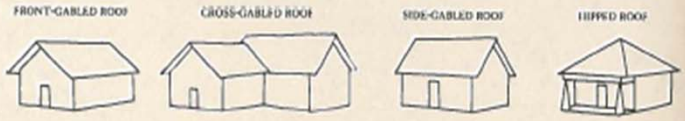
Field Guide to AH Houses

- The following slides are based on a presentation given to the RDS Committee to provide some context about the existing AH housing stock (supplemented with a few new photos)
- Used the *Field Guide to American Houses*, which is the essential resource for evaluating American architecture

Craftsman





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ECLECTIC HOUSES

Craftsman

1905-1930

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Low-pitched, gabled roof (occasionally hipped) with wide, unenclosed eave overhang; roof rafters usually exposed; decorative (false) beams or braces commonly added under gables; porches, either full- or partial-width, with roof supported by tapered square columns; columns or pedestals frequently extend to ground level (without a break at level of porch floor).

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Four principal subtypes can be distinguished:

FRONT-GABLED ROOF—About one-third of Craftsman houses are of this subtype. Porches, which may either be full- or partial-width, are almost evenly divided between those sheltered beneath the main roof and those with separate, extended roofs. Most examples of this subtype are one-story, but one-and-a-half- and two-story examples are not uncommon; dormers are found in only about 10 percent of this subtype.

CROSS-GABLED ROOF—Cross-gabled examples make up about one-fourth of Craftsman houses. Of these, three-quarters are one-story examples; dormers occur on about 20 percent. Porches are varied, but by far the most common type is a partial-width, front-gabled porch, its roof forming the cross gable.

SIDE-GABLED ROOF—About one-third of Craftsman houses are of this subtype. Most are one-and-a-half stories high with centered shed or gable dormers. Porches are generally contained under the main roof, sometimes with a break in slope. Two-story examples commonly have added, full-width porches. This subtype is most common in the northeastern and midwestern states.

HIPPED ROOF—These make up less than 10 percent of Craftsman houses; they are almost equally divided between one- and two-story examples. This subtype is similar to some simple Prairie houses, which normally lack the exposed rafters and other typical Craftsman details.

VARIANTS AND DETAILS

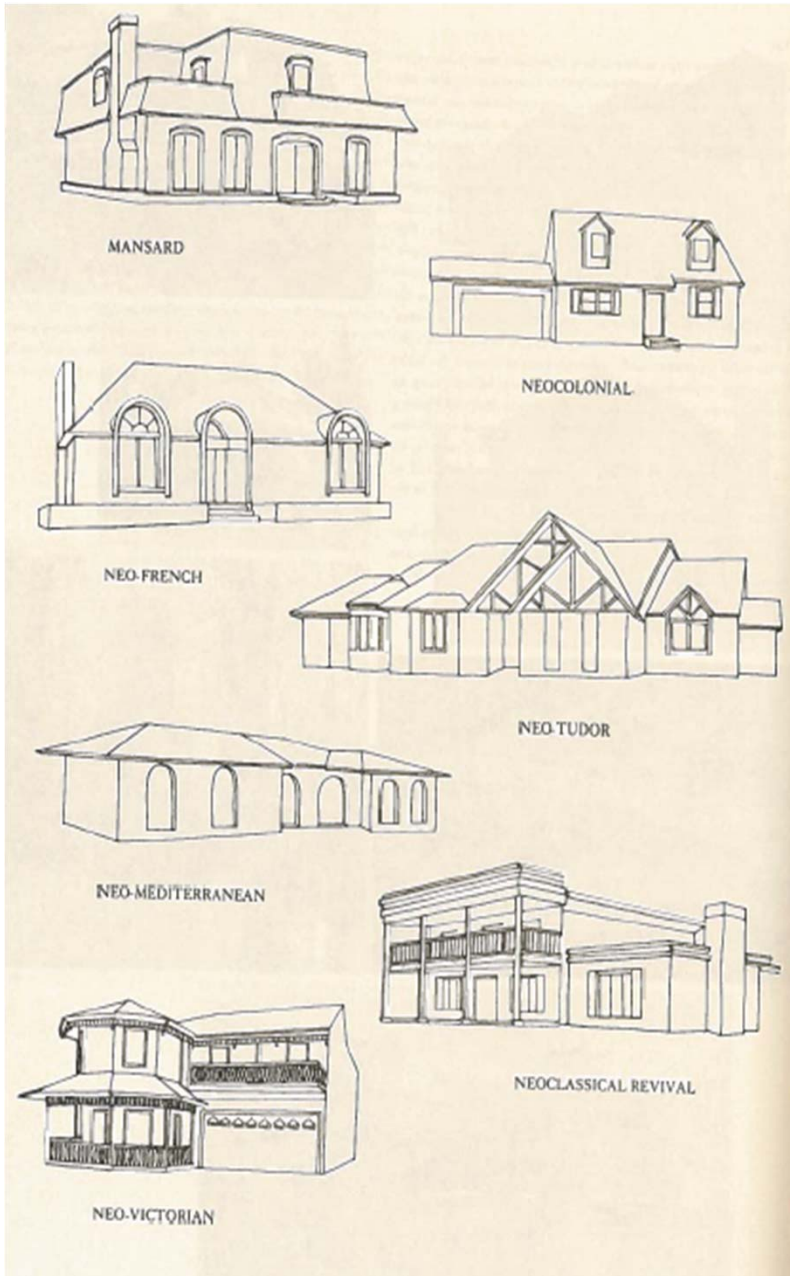
PORCH ROOF SUPPORTS—Columns for supporting the porch roofs are a distinctive and variable detail. Typically short, square upper columns rest upon more massive piers, or upon a solid porch balustrade. These columns, piers, or balustrades frequently begin directly

Craftsman

Craftsman

Craftsman

Neoeclectic



Neoeclectic

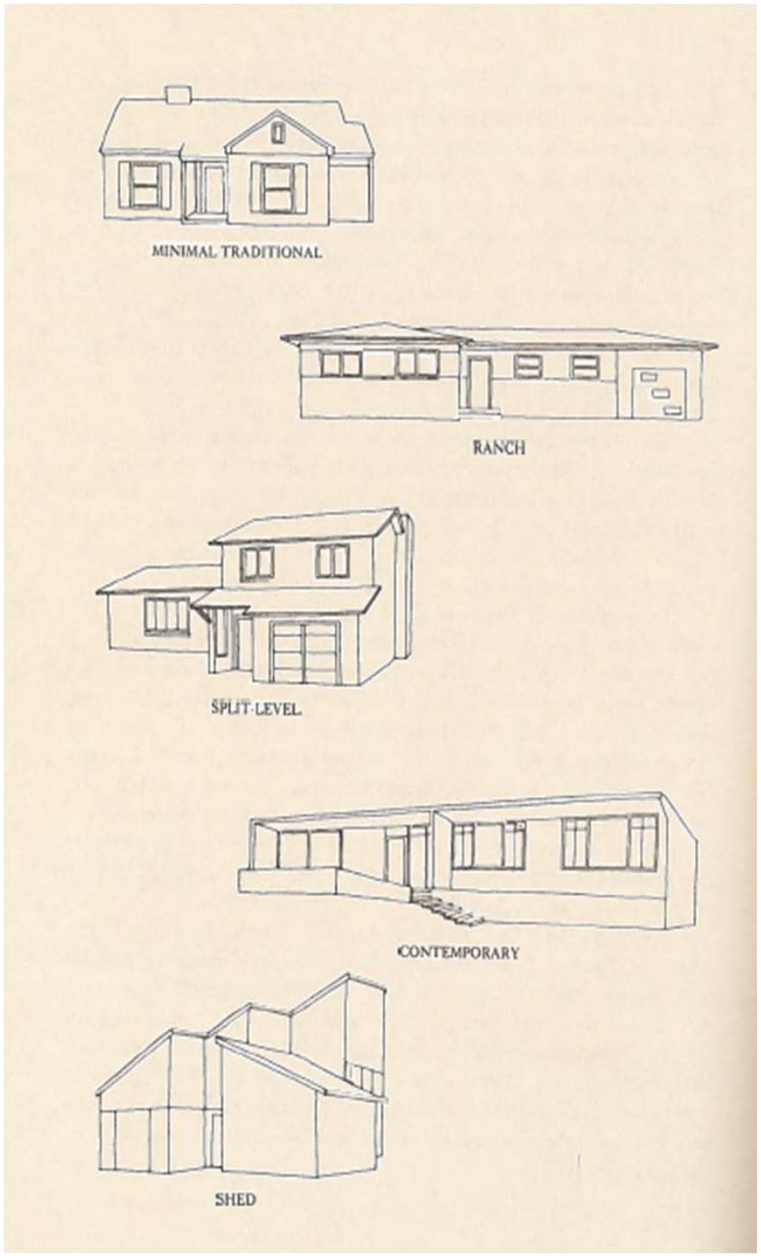
ca. 1965 to present

Although some pre-1940 Eclectic styles continued to be built into the early 1950s, the decades between 1950 and 1970 were dominated by the Modern styles discussed in the previous section. By the late 1960s, however, the fashions of domestic architecture were shifting back toward styles based on traditional, rather than modern, architectural shapes and detailing. The first popular style to emerge in this Neoeclectic phase of architectural taste was the Mansard, named for its characteristic roof form. Widely used by home builders in the 1960s, the mansard roof was not limited to houses, but swept shopping centers, apartment houses, and smaller commercial buildings as well. A second dominant Neoeclectic style is the Neocolonial, very free adaptations of English Colonial precedents that grew from the preceding, and generally more historically precise, Colonial Revival style. Neocolonial houses occur throughout the post-1940 period but sharply increased in popularity with the expansion of Neoeclecticism through the 1970s. The Neo-French style appeared about 1970 and by the early '80s was among the most fashionable throughout the country, reaching a level of popularity never achieved by its pre-1940 French Eclectic forebears. The style is particularly characterized by high hipped roofs and through-the-cornice-dormers (usually with rounded tops). The Neo-Tudor style has been a favorite since about 1970. Like its more correctly detailed pre-1940 predecessors, it has dominant, steeply pitched front gables, usually with half-timbered detailing.

Three additional Neoeclectic styles have not yet gained the popularity of the four already discussed. The Neo-Mediterranean includes free interpretations of the earlier Italian Renaissance, Spanish Eclectic, Mission, or Monterey styles; most examples have stucco walls, rounded arches, and red tile roofs. The Neoclassical Revival style borrows full-height columns from the preceding Neoclassical style, but freely applies them to a variety of house forms with little concern for historically accurate detailing. Its most common expression is seen in Neoclassical entry porches added to the one-story Ranch house form. The Neo-Victorian style is the most recent traditional revival. Most examples show free interpretations of Queen Anne spindlework porch detailing.

The fashion for Neoeclectic houses spread rapidly during the 1970s after a quiet beginning in the late '60s. Most American architectural styles began with high-fashion architect-designed landmark houses or public buildings which, in turn, inspired new designs for more modest houses. The Neoeclectic movement, in contrast, appears to have been first introduced by builders of modest houses who sensed the public's resurgent interest in traditional designs. The architectural profession, on the other hand, has been slow to abandon its emphasis on experimental modern styles. As a result, individually designed Neoeclectic landmark houses remain relatively uncommon.

Modern



Mode

ca. 1935 to prese

Most domestic building ceased between 1941 and 1945 as the United States prepared for and fought World War II. When construction resumed in 1946, houses based on historical precedent were largely abandoned in favor of new variations of the modern styles that had only begun to flourish in the pre-war years. The earliest of these, the Minimal Traditional style, was a simplified form loosely based on the previously dominant Tudor style of the 1920s and '30s. Like Tudor houses, these generally have a dominant front gable and massive chimneys, but the steep Tudor roof pitch is lowered and the facade is simplified by omitting most of the traditional detailing. These houses first became popular in the late 1930s and were the dominant style of the post-war '40s and early '50s. By the early 1950s they were being replaced by the Ranch style, which dominated American domestic building through the '60s and is still popular in many parts of the country. These are one-story houses with very low-pitched roofs and broad, rambling facades. Some lack decorative detailing, but most have decorative shutters, porch-roof supports, or other detailing; these are usually loosely based on colonial precedents. Also during the 1950s the closely related Split Level style, with half-story wings and sunken garages, began to emerge. These generally have some traditional decorative detailing but their unusual form clearly marks them as modern houses. A somewhat less common modern style, the Contemporary, completely eschews traditional form and detail, and was particularly favored in architect-designed houses of the 1950s, '60s, and early '70s. These generally have wide eave overhangs and either flat roofs or low-pitched roofs with broad, low, front-facing gables. Exposed supporting beams and other structural members are common. Contrasting wall materials and textures, and unusual window shapes and placements are also typical features. The most recent of the modern styles is the Shed style. Like the Contemporary, this style eschews traditional detail and is most common in architect-designed houses of the late 1960s and '70s. It is characterized by one or more shed-roofed elements, usually of moderate to high pitch, which dominate the facade and give the effect of several geometric forms shoved together.

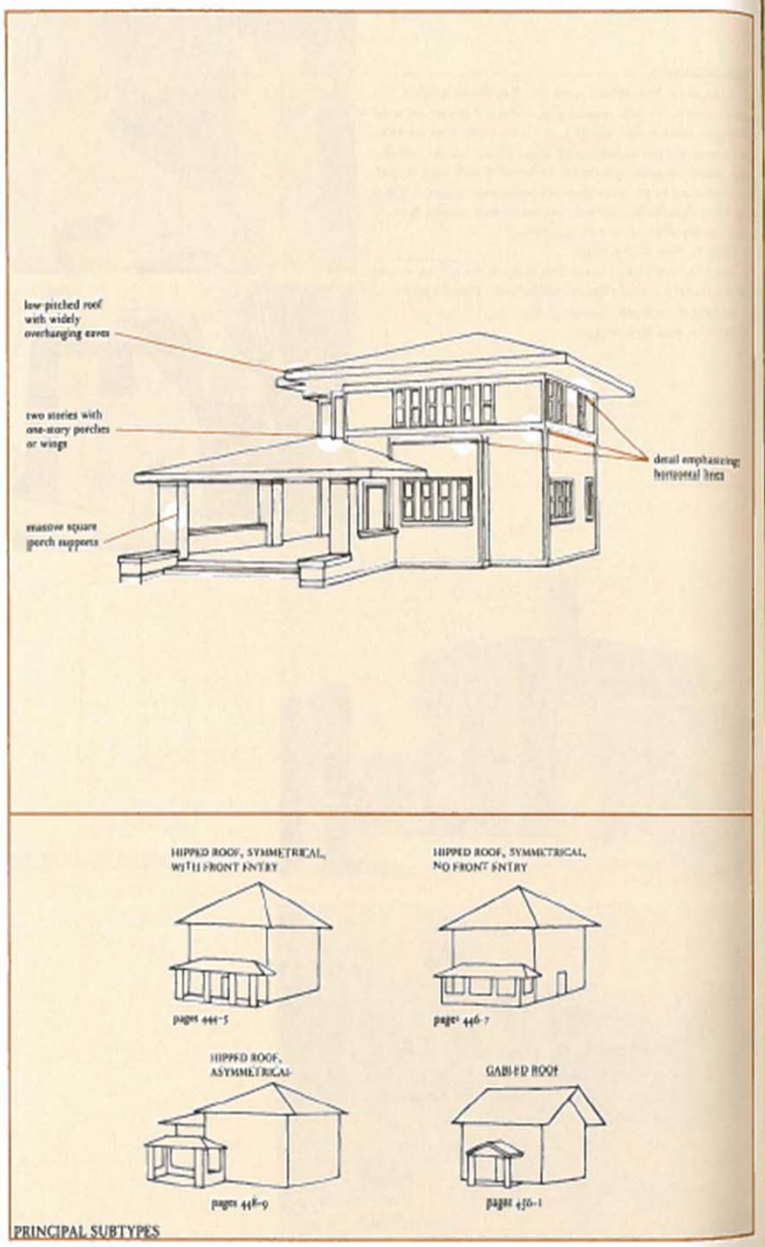
The five styles described above are by far the most common modern styles built since 1940. Many additional modern designs have, however, appeared through this period. Some have been dominated by regional design considerations or legacies, while others have been inspired by energy-conservation considerations or by new and experimental advances in building technology.

Contemporary

Ranch

Minimal Traditional

Prairie



Prairie

1900–1920

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Low-pitched roof, usually hipped, with widely overhanging eaves; two stories, with one-story wings or porches; eaves, cornices, and facade detailing emphasizing horizontal lines; often with massive, square porch supports.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Four principal subtypes can be distinguished:

HIPPED ROOF, SYMMETRICAL, WITH FRONT ENTRY—This subtype, which is sometimes called the Prairie Box or American Foursquare, has a simple square or rectangular plan, low-pitched hipped roof, and symmetrical facade. One-story wings, porches, or carports are clearly subordinate to the principal two-story mass. The entrance, which may be centered or off-center, is a conspicuous focal point of the facade. This was the earliest Prairie form and developed into the most common vernacular version. In vernacular examples, hipped dormers are common, as are full-width, single-story front porches and double-hung sash windows. Many show Mission or Italian Renaissance secondary details, such as tiled roofs or cornice-line brackets.

HIPPED ROOF, SYMMETRICAL, NO FRONT ENTRY—Similar to the type just described but with inconspicuous entrances and facades dominated by horizontal rows of casement windows having sharply defined vertical detailing. This is a favorite form for smaller, architect-designed Prairie houses and also for those built on narrow urban lots.

HIPPED ROOF, ASYMMETRICAL—Most high-style examples are of this form. Typically a single two- or three-story, hipped-roof mass is contrasted with equally dominant, but lower, wings, porches, or carports with hipped roofs. The front entrance is usually inconspicuous, the facade being dominated by horizontal rows of casement windows having sharply defined vertical detailing. Many variations occur, but in all cases the facade is asymmetrical; most have masonry walls.

GABLED ROOF—In this subtype, gables replace the more typical hipped roofs. High-style examples typically have both front-facing and side gables, each with exaggerated eave overhangs. In some, the gables have swept-back profiles with the peaks projecting beyond the lower edges. The pitch of the roof edges may also be flattened to give a pagoda-like effect. Vernacular examples usually have simple front- or side-gabled roofs. Tudor secondary influences are common, particularly false half-timbering in gables.

Prairie

Prairie

Prairie

Mission

SYMMETRICAL

ASYMMETRICAL

pages 414-15

RINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Miss

1890-

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Mission-shaped dormer or roof parapet (these may be on either main roof or porch roof); commonly with red tile roof covering; widely overhanging eaves, usually open; porch roofs supported by large, square piers, commonly arched above; wall surface usually smooth stucco.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Two principal subtypes can be distinguished:

SYMMETRICAL—About half of Mission houses have balanced, symmetrical facades. These are most commonly of simple square or rectangular plan with hipped roofs.

ASYMMETRICAL—The remaining half of Mission houses have asymmetrical facades of widely varying form. Most typically the facade asymmetry is superimposed on a simple square or rectangular plan. Elaborate, rambling compound plans are found on some landmark examples.

VARIANTS AND DETAILS

A great variety of shaped dormers and roof parapets mimic those found on some Spanish Colonial mission buildings. Few are precise copies of the original models. Most examples have prominent one-story porches either at the entry area or covering the full width of the facade; these sometimes have arched roof supports to simulate the arcades of Hispanic buildings. Mission-like bell towers occur on a few landmark examples. Quatrefoil windows are common; decorative detailing is generally absent, although patterned tiles, carved stonework, or other wall surface ornament is occasionally used. Some examples have unusual visor roofs. These are narrow, tiled roof segments cantilevered out from a smooth wall surface (similar to the pent roofs seen in some Georgian or Queen Anne houses). They most commonly occur beneath the parapets of flat roofs.

OCCURRENCE

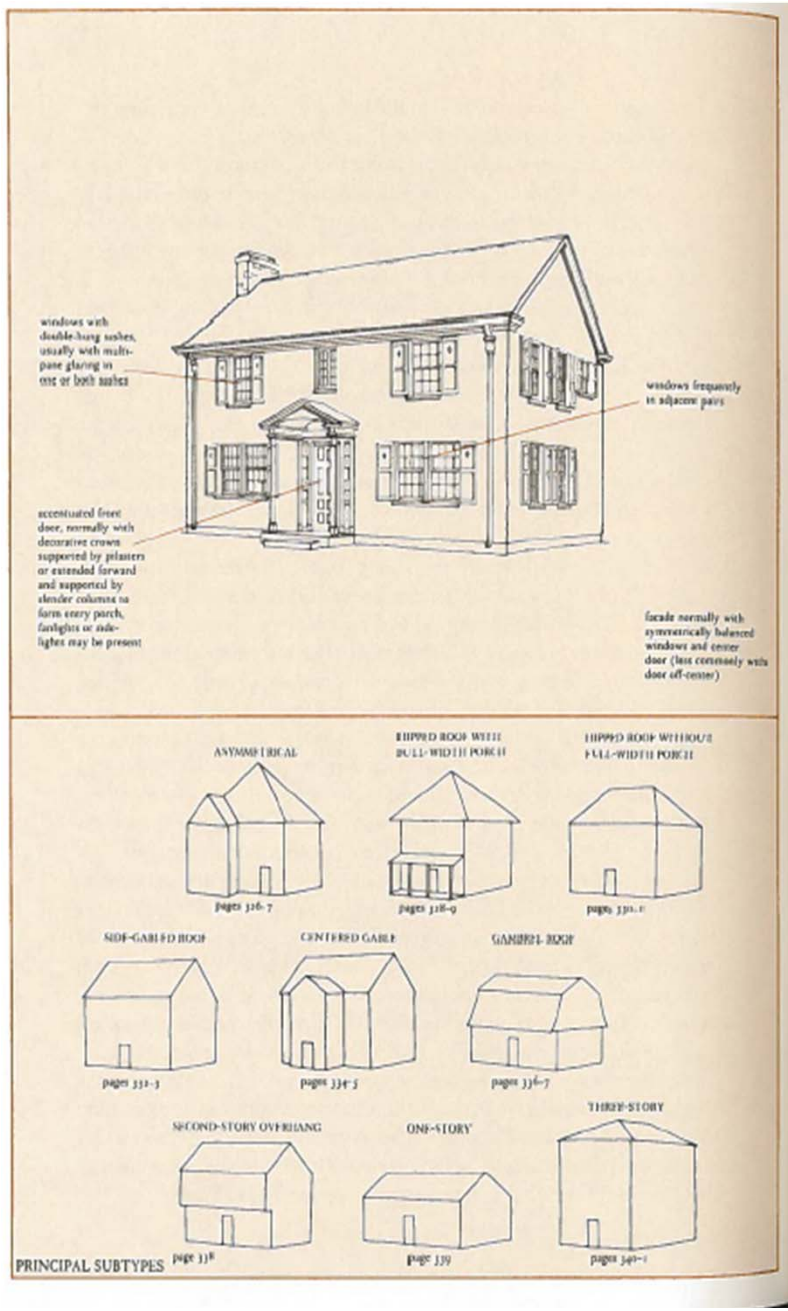
California was the birthplace of the Mission style and many of its landmark examples are concentrated there. The earliest were built in the 1890s; by 1900 houses in this style were spreading eastward under the influence of fashionable architects and national builders' magazines. Although never common outside of the southwestern states, scattered exam-

Mission/Mediterranean

Mission/Mediterranean

Italianate

Colonial Revival



Colonial Revival

1880–1955

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Accentuated front door, normally with decorative crown (pediment) supported by pilasters, or extended forward and supported by slender columns to form entry porch; doors commonly have overhead fanlights or sidelights; facade normally shows symmetrically balanced windows and center door (less commonly with door off-center); windows with double-hung sashes, usually with multi-pane glazing in one or both sashes; windows frequently in adjacent pairs.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Nine principal subtypes can be distinguished. Some examples may be almost identical to their colonial (particularly Georgian and Adam) prototypes. Clues for distinguishing Revival copies from early originals are given below under Variants and Details.

ASYMMETRICAL—About 10 percent of Colonial Revival houses have asymmetrical facades, a feature rarely seen on their colonial prototypes. These asymmetrical examples range from rambling, free-form houses resembling the free classic Queen Anne style (see pages 276–9) to simple boxes with asymmetrical window or porch arrangements. Prior to 1900 this subtype accounted for about one-third of all Colonial Revival houses. After 1910 few examples were constructed until the 1930s, when irregular facades reappeared with less elaborate detailing. These were, in part, inspired by the desire for attached garages, which were difficult to incorporate within a balanced facade.

HIPPED ROOF WITH FULL-WIDTH PORCH—About one-third of Colonial Revival houses built before about 1915 are of this subtype, which is sometimes called the Classic Box. These have a one-story, full-width porch with classical columns, which is added to a symmetrical, two-story house of square or rectangular plan. Two-story pilasters are common at the corners; dormers, hipped or gabled, are usually present. Doors may be centered or placed to the side. These houses have both Neoclassical and Colonial Revival influences, but lack the full-height porches of typical Neoclassical houses.

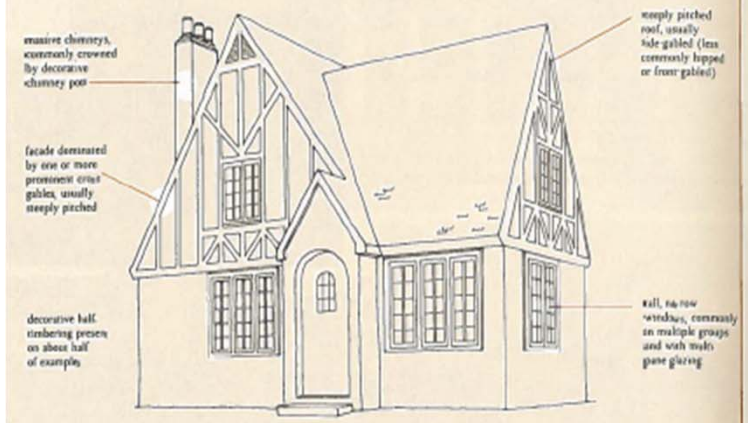
HIPPED ROOF WITHOUT FULL-WIDTH PORCH—About 25 percent of Colonial Revival houses are simple two-story rectangular blocks with hipped roofs; porches are usually absent or, if present, are merely small entry porches covering less than the full facade width. This subtype, built throughout the Colonial Revival era, predominates before about 1910. On early examples, the colonial detailing tended to be highly exaggerated and of awkward

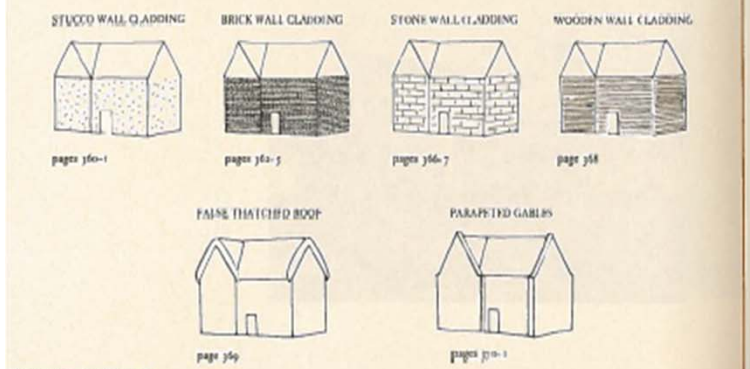
Colonial Revival

Colonial Revival

Neoclassical

Tudor





PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Tudor

1890–1940

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

Steeply pitched roof, usually side-gabled (less commonly hipped or front-gabled); facade dominated by one or more prominent cross gables, usually steeply pitched; decorative (i.e., not structural) half-timbering present on about half of examples; tall, narrow windows, usually in multiple groups and with multi-pane glazing; massive chimneys, commonly crowned by decorative chimney pots.

PRINCIPAL SUBTYPES

Six principal subtypes can be distinguished:

STUCCO WALL CLADDING—A relatively small percentage of Tudor houses have stucco walls. These are most common on modest examples built before the widespread adoption of brick and stone veneering techniques in the 1920s. In the early decades of the century wood-frame houses could be most easily disguised as masonry by applying stucco cladding over the wooden studs; many early Tudor houses used this technique, both with and without false half-timbering.

BRICK WALL CLADDING—This is the most common Tudor subtype. Walls of solid brick masonry were sometimes used on landmark examples early in this century, but brick became the preferred wall finish for even the most modest Tudor cottages after masonry veneering became widespread in the 1920s. Brick first-story walls are commonly contrasted with stone, stucco, or wooden claddings on principal gables or upper stories. False half-timbering occurs on about half the houses in this style, with infilling of stucco or brick between the timbers and, quite often, elaborate decorative patterns in the arrangement of timbers or brick.

STONE WALL CLADDING—Stone trim is common on Tudor houses of all subtypes but only a relatively small proportion have stone as the principal wall material. Like the ones just described, these were principally large landmark houses before 1920. During the 1920s and '30s, modest, stone-veneered cottages appeared. In this subtype, brick, stucco, or wooden trim is frequent on gables or second stories, as is false half-timbering.

WOODEN WALL CLADDING—Earlier American styles based on English Medieval precedents (Gothic Revival, Stick, Queen Anne) were executed predominantly in wood, whereas principal walls with wooden cladding are uncommon on Tudor houses. Modest examples are occasionally seen with weatherboard or shingled walls; stuccoed gables with half-timbering may be added above.

Tudor

Tudor

Tudor

Neo-Traditional Examples
(New based on traditional design)

Neo-French

Neo-French

Neo-Italianate

Neo-Italianate

Neo-Italianate